

News From U.S. Senator

North Dakota

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North Dakota Judge had historic role in civil rights push:

DORGAN LEGISLATION WOULD NAME GRAND FORKS FEDERAL BUILDING AFTER JUDGE RONALD DAVIES

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) --- The U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee has approved legislation written by Senator Byron Dorgan to honor the North Dakota federal judge who ordered the 1957 integration of Little Rock Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. The ruling by the late Judge Ronald N. Davies, was an historic one, helping to launch the drive for civil rights in the late 1950's and 1960's. Dorgan's legislation, which was approved by the Appropriations Committee last week, will re-name the Grand Forks Federal Building and Courthouse the "Judge Ronald N. Davies Federal Building and Courthouse." The legislation is part of the Treasury and General Government Appropriations bill which will be voted on by the full Senate this week.

"Judge Davies was a remarkable man who helped change the course of our society with a simple, yet powerful ruling," said Dorgan, who is a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee. "I can think of no better way to celebrate his contributions and preserve his legacy for future generations, than by naming this building in his honor."

In 1957, while filling a temporary vacancy, Davies challenged Governor Orval Faubus and the Arkansas National Guard in their efforts to maintain segregation in Arkansas schools. His ruling, called a "landmark decision on racial integration in our nation" by the New York Times, was based on the simple principle that "integration must begin forthwith."

Judge Davies, a 1927 graduate of the University of North Dakota, earned his law degree from Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. He then returned to Grand Forks to practice law and serve as a municipal judge. His practice was interrupted by the outbreak of World War II in Europe, where he served in the U.S. Army and rose from a Lieutenant to Lieutenant Colonel. He resumed his law practice in Grand Forks after the war and was appointed a U.S. District Judge in Fargo in 1955.

Davies went on to become a Senior U.S. District Judge in 1971. He died in 1996.

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